

National Week for Life and the Family (CCCB)
May 10 (Fifth Sunday of Easter) – May 17 (Sixth Sunday of Easter), 2020

Plan for Parish Use

THEME: “Children: The Crowning Glory of Marriage”

This year’s theme—*Children: The Crowning Glory of Marriage*—is taken from the Church’s teaching as set forth in the Second Vatican Council and reiterated by the Magisterium. Most recently this teaching is taken up in the fifth chapter of Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation, *The Joy of Love (Amoris Laetitia)*, whereby he reflects on “Love Made Fruitful” in family life. A brief summary of chapter five is provided.

Outline

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- Promotion before the National Week for Life and Family begins
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- Events and Activities
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- Prayer for the National Week for Life and the Family
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- Homily Notes/Suggestions
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- Suggested Events and Activities: A. At Home; B. In the Parish

A Summary of “Love Made Fruitful”, chapter five of *The Joy of Love*

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* echoes the Second Vatican Council when it states that children are the crowning glory of marriage (CCC, 1652, *Gaudium et Spes*, 48). Children are born of the love between a father and mother. Borrowing the title of chapter five from Pope Francis’ apostolic exhortation, *The Joy of Love (Amoris Laetitia)*, we could say that children are “Love Made Fruitful.” Pope Francis reminds us that “love always gives life.” Children are a gift from God and “are a living reflection of [the] love” between a father and a mother. As a sign of God’s “utterly gratuitous dimension of love,” children are not a mistake but are to be accepted and protected so that they may attain their “final goal [which] is the joy of eternal life.”

Parents exercise “responsible parenthood” when they discern wisely—according to their particular circumstances in life—the number of children they desire to raise. At the same time Pope Francis states that “large families are a joy for the Church . . . [because] they are an expression of the fruitfulness of love.”

God reveals his love through the love of a child’s parents. Fathers and mothers participate with God “in the miracle of a new life.” “Every child has a right to receive love from a mother and a father; both are necessary for a child’s integral and harmonious development.” “The clear and well-defined presence of both figures, female and male, creates the environment best suited to the growth of the child.”

Despite their intense desire “some couples are unable to have children.” This in no way diminishes their marriage which is a “communion of life.” Parenthood “is not a solely biological reality, but is expressed in diverse ways.” Some couples become parents through adoption and in this manner “become channels of God’s love.” There are different “ways of experiencing the fruitfulness of love.” “No family can be fruitful if it sees itself as overly different or ‘set apart’.”

Each one of us comes from a family; “we are all sons and daughters.” We have not created ourselves but have received life as a great gift. “In the family we learn to live as one.” “From this initial experience of fraternity, nourished by affection and education at home, the style of fraternity radiates like a promise upon the whole of society.” Families are part of a larger family made up of many members from the wider community. This “extended family” is meant to help those in need: single mothers, orphans, and widows.

Grandparents are also part of this extended family. “Very often it is grandparents who ensure that the most important values are passed down to their children and ‘many people can testify that they owe their initiation into the Christian life to their grandparents.’” Pope Francis has said that “Grandparents . . . are entrusted with a great responsibility: to transmit their life experience, their family history, the history of a community, of a people; to share wisdom with simplicity, and the faith itself — the most precious heritage!” (*Meeting with the Elderly*, 28 September 2014).

“God has given the family the job of ‘domesticating’ the world and helping each person to see fellow human beings as brothers and sisters.” “By their witness as well as their words, families speak to others of Jesus. They pass on the faith, they arouse a desire for God and they reflect the beauty of the Gospel and its way of life.” “Their fruitfulness expands and in countless ways makes God’s love present in society.”

1. PROMOTION

Before the “Week” begins . . .

- **Prayer:** A call to prayer for life and the family in Canada to be issued on Easter Sunday, (April 12, 2020) or on the Second Sunday of Easter (April 19, 2020), together with the distribution of a prayer card – downloadable from the Week’s website page ([click here](#)). We encourage dioceses/eparchies to print and promote the prayer.
- **Bulletin announcements:** Parish bulletins could publish the following promotional announcements a few weeks in advance and on the Sunday chosen to celebrate the Week (either May 10 or May 17, 2019):
 - A. National Week for Life and the Family (May 10-17) – This year, in the Church in Canada, the Week will focus on the theme: **“Children: The Crowning Glory of Marriage”**. For more information about events related to the week, see: ([Click here](#)).
 - B. “Children: The Crowning Glory of Marriage” – The mystery of God’s love can be seen in marriage and the family which is an icon of the Trinity. The love between a husband and wife can, by the grace of God, bear fruit in the blessing of a new child. In the gift of new life, parents become co-creators with God. We can say that children are the crowning glory of marriage. What parent does not rejoice in their child’s achievements? What parent does not want the best for their child? Pope Francis reminds us: “Take care of your family life, giving your children and loved ones not just money, but most of all your time, attention and love.” Perhaps the best way we can take care of our children is to help them grow in faith. In this way we help them to encounter Jesus who with his Spirit sends us into the world to reveal the Father’s love for all of his children. Please visit ([Click here](#)).

2. THE EUCHARIST

On one of the Sundays during the National Week for Life and the Family (either May 10 or May 17), the theme of life and the family can be creatively worked into the homily.

- **Homily Notes / Suggestions:** ([see specific section](#))
- **Prayers of the Faithful:** ([see specific section](#))

3. EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

In his apostolic exhortation *Christus Vivit*, Pope Francis says the “young people are the ‘now’ of God.” As the crowning glory of marriage, children are both a gift and a task. Our Holy Father reminds us that the task of motherhood and fatherhood is to make the beauty of this gift “shine in society.” This is done, he continues, by transmitting the life of faith. Here are some suggestions in which parents can transmit their life of faith to their children.

A. At home ([see “Suggested Events and Activities”](#))

B. In the parish ([see “Suggested Events and Activities”](#))

Suggested Plan for Parish Use

1. You are invited to review the [Plan](#).
2. You are invited to choose the Sunday on which your parish will celebrate the Family (May 10 – Fifth Sunday of Easter or May 17 – Sixth Sunday of Easter).
3. You are invited to call the faithful to pray for the family sometime in April and distribute the prayer card (available on the website and printed in advance).
4. You are invited to promote the “Week” in the parish bulletin (see suggested announcements).

Letter from the President of the CCCB

1. You are invited to print out and copy the [letter](#) by Archbishop Richard Gagnon to Catholic families for distribution after Mass.
2. The letter can also be read after Mass.

The Eucharist

1. You are invited to consult the suggested [homily notes](#) and use them as you see fit.
2. You are invited to incorporate some of the suggested themes when developing your [Prayers of the Faithful](#) (perhaps asking members of the same family to proclaim them).
3. In advance, you are invited to ask a couple or a family to give a brief testimony at the end of Mass on how their experience of family life has helped them to encounter God’s love.

Events and Activities

1. You are invited to print out the “Suggested Events and Activities” sheet for distribution after Mass.
2. You are invited to introduce those suggestions after Mass (perhaps after the testimony given by a family) and encourage families to celebrate their own family at home (see suggestions).
3. You are invited to decide on parish activity to celebrate the family (see suggestions), organize and promote the event.